

Whither Peace Studies? Fragmentation to a New Integration?

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Abstract

In spite of the surface appearance of flourishing, peace studies now faces a crisis of dilution and fragmentation though concerned voices have long warned against it. The root of the crisis is traced back to the years around 1970, when Johan Galtung proposed the theory of structural violence. At that time, there were heated debates about whether to broaden the research agenda to include poverty and underdevelopment or not. It is shown that, though it was a great contribution to peace studies, the theory of structural violence also brought about the excessive expansion of the research agenda of the discipline, because, according to the theory, every important social problem could be a legitimate research subject of peace studies. More than two decades after the debates, however, there have appeared several symptoms which show the reorientation of the discipline toward the original narrower focus on war and conflict. Since a simple return to the past is impossible, it is suggested that, by focusing on the issues of war and conflict, peace studies should try to eliminate one of the major obstacles to the final goal of peace in the broadest sense of the word. To complicate the matter, however, there have recently been debates between the narrower and wider agendas in security studies. The wider agenda in security studies tends to broaden peace studies as well because an issue or problem like environmental degradation is claimed to be a peace studies issue on the ground that it is a security issue. Thus, peace studies will have to tackle with the same problem for some time to come.

Introduction: Peace Studies Flourishing?

Recently, we have witnessed in Japan a (perhaps second⁽¹⁾) wave of new university textbooks on peace studies. Among them, we have Usui and Hoshino's, Okamoto and Yokoyama's, Okamoto's, to mention a few⁽²⁾. In addition, according to a survey by Mitsuo Okamoto, peace studies and related subjects are taught in more than 150 Japanese universities and colleges (Okamoto 1997). On the surface, these facts seem to show that peace studies has been flourishing,⁽³⁾ even if (or simply because) peace does not prevail in our world. One cannot, however, uncritically admire the flourishing of peace studies, though it may have achieved many things as Chadwick Alger (1999) suggests. Nor can one be too optimistic about its present state and future. Otherwise, how can we explain the appearance of such a book as *The New Agenda for Peace Research*? Actually, I share with some the fear that peace studies has now gone too far toward fragmentation, and hence the belief that some renewed efforts for integration or synthesis is in order. Diversification of research subjects may be a sign for the good health of an academic discipline. However, the diversification should be based on a firm common core. In the present state of

peace studies, it seems that the very common core of the discipline has been considerably eroded, dissipated and fragmented as I will try to show below. Of course, this is only my impression. I have not attempted any extensive review or survey of the discipline. Contrary to my impression and concerns expressed by others, peace studies may actually have firmly maintained its core ever since its inception. Anyway, I will try below to find roots of today's crisis of peace studies by tracing its development since the early days.

Since the author made a similar review of the current state of peace studies in Japan elsewhere (Matsuo 1995), an international dimension of the discipline will be discussed in what follows.

1 Early Years of Peace Studies: The Birth and the Growing Dilemma

Peace studies as an academic discipline is said to have been born around 1960. The early discipline (then called "peace research") concentrated its attention almost exclusively upon the issue of war. Tragedies of the two World Wars and the imminent danger of the third, which would surely be a nuclear war, may account for the preoccupation with war in this period. Accordingly, peace studies took it for granted that "peace" was the "absence of war." Of course, the research goal of the early peace studies, that is, the academic search for the causes of war and conditions of peace, has not lost any of its relevance today. In retrospect, however, the discipline in its early days was unwittingly entrapped by what can be called a "Westphalian" fallacy.

First of all, the predominant research theme, "war," was implicitly assumed to be those among major powers. Only major wars were thought to be worth the name of "war," though it is quite understandable when we consider the historical background of the time. This assumption left two important research areas almost completely out of consideration: the developing world and the local conflicts sweeping it. Thus, systematic studies on local wars were virtually neglected until the seminal works of Istvan Kende (1971, 1978) appeared in the 1970s rather from the then periphery of peace studies. For instance, even the ambitious attempt of the Correlates of War Project, initiated at the University of Michigan in order to accumulate the data on war in a scientific and more rigorous method (Geller and Singer 1998: 12), limited its data exclusively to those of wars between states, categorically excluding intrastate wars from its attention. Lastly, war was assumed to be symmetric, that is, fought between roughly equal powers. And in addition, due to the then prevalent behavioral approach, quantifiable objective data were disproportionately overemphasized, as if nothing mattered when you could not count it.

The pitfalls into which the war-centered and state-centered early peace studies had fallen gradually became apparent during the 1960s and the early '70s. The emergence of the North-South problem as the urgent global issue, and asymmetric wars or uses of force as in the Vietnam War and the Spring of Prague, seemed to undermine the implicit assumptions of the early peace studies. Many, especially from the South, could not avert their eyes from the poverty and misery of their fellow people, and began to cast a serious doubt upon the validity of the definition of peace as the absence of war. Sugata Dasgupta, for one, raised the question whether we could apply the term "peace" to the miserable and poor lives of the people in the South, though there were apparently no wars (Dasgupta 1968). Of course, the latter part of the question was rather rhetorical because developing countries were not only poverty-stricken, but also war-stricken with vast numbers of deaths and dislocations. This was the "first crisis" of peace studies and, as we see below, a heated confrontation ensued between the protagonists of the "old agenda" focusing on war and those of the "new agenda" focusing on "structural violence" (Wiberg 1993:

10).

2 Structural Violence

It was against this background that Johan Galtung published a now classical article, in which he proposed the theory of structural violence (Galtung 1969). To be precise, what he proposed was new concepts of peace and violence, and not the concept of structural violence proper. But the term has now become quite popularized and firmly established beyond any (historical or academic) correction. Galtung's theory was intended to solve the dilemmas undermining peace studies at the time, by providing a broader theoretical framework which integrates the issues of war and poverty into a higher (or deeper) synthesis. The key was the concept of violence. Galtung defined peace as the absence of violence, and not as the absence of war. What is violence, then? Violence is everything which prevents the full realization of somatic and mental human potentials. According to the definition, both deaths in war (or by atomic bombings) and premature deaths due to poverty and oppression are the same phenomenon, resulting from violence. Next, Galtung proceeded to divide violence into two categories: direct violence in which agents or actors can be specified as in war, and structural violence in which agents or actor cannot be specified as in the case of poverty and underdevelopment. The latter can be called structural because domestic and international political, economic, and social structures are primarily responsible for it. In this way, Galtung succeeded in providing a theoretical framework which embraced both war and poverty, both the North and the South. Now peace studies was capable of dealing in a theoretically consistent manner both with the issues of war and poverty, with the urgent issues of the North and the South.

It is in a sense natural that many criticisms should have been leveled against Galtung's theory. Of these, one of the most profound and incisive was that made by Kenneth Boulding (1977). As we saw above, Galtung's definition of peace as the absence of violence focused on the commonality of the consequence, whether by war or by underdevelopment. For, in both cases, human potentials are prevented from full realization. In other words, the tragedy of war and the misery of poverty have very much in common as the results of violence. In this sense, Galtung's definition of peace, and hence the research agenda for peace studies, placed an emphasis upon the materialized phenomena or results.

In contradistinction, Boulding placed a greater emphasis on the structures and processes leading to the consequences or results. He argued that, though there were considerable overlaps, the processes and structures leading to one should be theoretically sharply distinguished from those leading to the other. Because the commonality of the results did not stem from the commonality of the causes. The difference between the two can be schematically illustrated as in Figure 1 below. Though he fully admitted the importance of the issues of development formulated by Galtung, Boulding went so far as to add that the notion of structural violence should be regarded as an academic metaphor at best because both war and poverty were brought about by *structural* factors. Boulding's argument reflected his position that peace studies should devote its efforts to the issues of war and conflict, and by such concentration on a specific research area, it would be able to make a much greater contribution to the human race, that is, the promotion of peace in the traditional, narrower sense.

Nevertheless, the theory of structural violence won the support and sympathy of the overwhelming

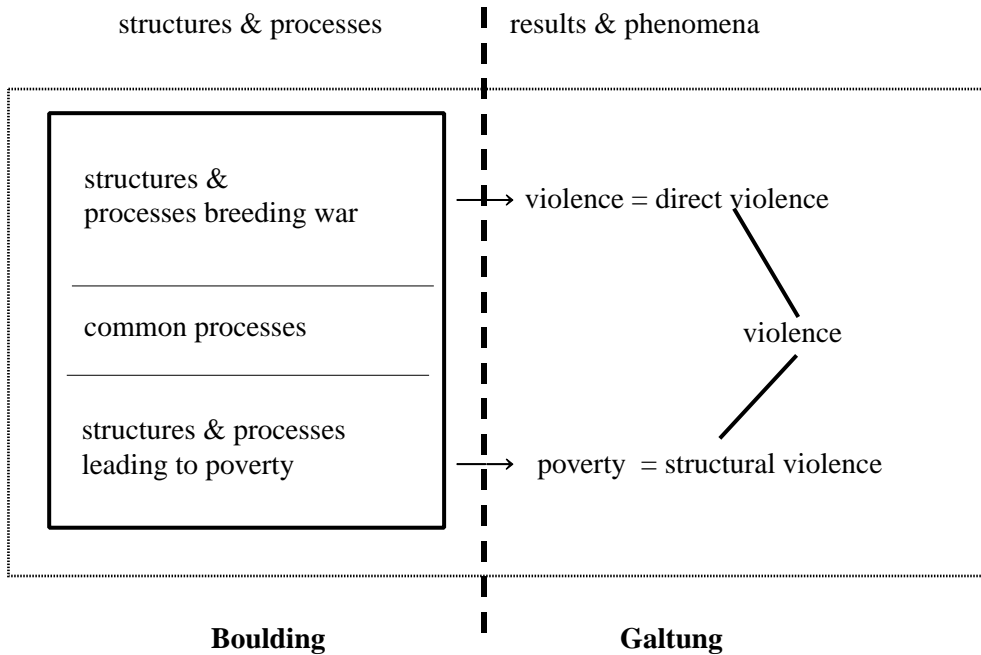


Figure 1 Violence and Poverty: Causes and Effects

majority of peace researchers in spite of the criticisms by Boulding and others. From then on, peace studies broadened its research agenda to include a variety of issues which developing countries faced. Thus, the theory of structural violence not only deepened the meaning of peace, but also provided a new integrated theoretical framework and opened new research vistas. It was a real contribution to peace studies. Most significant of all, the concept of violence was defined on the basis of the full realization of human potentials, in other words, human rights in the broadest and most fundamental sense of the word. The idea that human rights in this sense is the most important element of peace, and hence the most important research goal for peace studies seems to have come to be shared by the majority of peace students.

On the other hand, the ready acceptance of the theory of structural violence was also accompanied by the danger of fragmentation of the discipline. For one thing, the concept of violence proposed by Galtung was too broad and too all-embracing, as some knowingly say that violence is everything Galtung does not like. As long as human rights in the above sense continued to be the research priority, every urgent problem of our world should be included in the research agenda as important research themes. War, conflict, poverty, disease, inequality, discrimination, social injustice, political oppression, and environmental degradation should all be important research subjects for peace studies. Thus, peace studies was precipitated toward fragmentation, losing sight of its common core.

Needless to say, it was not in vain. Peace studies may have gone a little astray but was not wandering aimlessly in a barren wilderness. As Alger demonstrates, important peace approaches or “tools” were

found during this period such as “economic development,” “economic equity,” “ecological balance,” “governance of the global commons,” “feminist perspectives,” “peace education,” and “people’s movements” (Alger 1999: 30-39).

As we saw above, Boulding warned against such a trend. And events in the world seemed some times to stop the trend. When the deployment of intermediate nuclear forces was shaking Western Europe in the early 1980s, a voice was heard to say, “we have been missing our real target in all these years when we focused on structural violence rather than on the war making capacities of our societies” (Krippendorff 1981: 109). And at around the same time, another researcher deplored that “peace research [has] grown in so many different directions that it is by now beyond the competence of any individual person to be more than knowledgeable about a few areas,...” and that “a synthesis, in the sense of forging different traditions together,” is lacking (Wiberg 1981: 147). This was the second crisis, though it was not so visible as the first. Peace studies had now become “a black hole” absorbing every social problem or “[after the fall of] the tower of Babel” (Wiberg 1993: 10-11). Thus, in some quarters at least, the necessity of a new integration of the discipline or “some common core theory” (Wiberg 1993: 11) was felt in the face of the fragmentation of peace studies carried too far.

3 A New Integration?

The prevalence of local armed conflicts in the contemporary world is not necessarily due to the collapse of the superpower bipolar system. Many genocidal protracted local wars occurred amidst the Cold War. But the end of the Cold War surely contributed to the greater attention paid to local conflicts. That is, the end of the war of one type has heightened the urgency of another. Admittedly, instead of classical interstate wars, intrastate wars and other forms of political violence like terrorism have been increasingly becoming a principal mode of organized physical violence or as a cause of death (Tromp 1992: 11-12).

The alleged “obsolescence of major war” with the end of Cold War brought about the third crisis in Europe at least (Wiberg 1993: 11). Since the immediate danger of major war or nuclear war faded away in Europe, it was argued that peace studies, which was preoccupied with major war, or with East-West armed confrontation, “should be buried together with the Cold War” (de Wilde 1993: 42). In contrast, the second crisis continued, “to a sickening degree the same as before - or even worse” (Wiberg 1993: 11), in other parts of the world.

More importantly, however, the world has become keenly aware that these local wars have taken death tolls of more than 20 millions and have left a similar number of refugees today. How can peace studies ignore the importance of these figures?

Probably in response to these developments, several peace studies anthologies published shortly after the euphoria over the end of the Cold War emphasized war, conflict and security issues (Balász 1993: 8, Boulding 1992: 1-2). Moreover, peace studies journals have recently tended to put a much greater emphasis upon the issue of war and conflict. For example, a cursory look at the recent issues of such journals as *Journal of Peace Research* and *Peace & Change*, show clearly that most of the articles and review essays address interstate and intrastate wars in some way or other, directly or indirectly. “Awakened” by the prevalence of local conflicts and the seriousness of their threat to peace, is peace studies now reverting to its earlier stage? The answer is “yes” in a sense and “no” in another, as both Jeong (1999) and Alger (1999) suggest.

The answer is “no” because a simple return to the former stage is impossible especially once we know the theory of structural violence. It was, as it were, a river of no return, and we have already crossed it. The full realization of human potentials, or the realization of human rights in the deepest sense will continue to be the common ultimate goal of peace studies. “Emancipatory knowledge interest,” to borrow Heyward Alker’s words (Alker 1988: 220), or the interest in the final emancipation of the human race from every thing which prevents the full realization of human potentials will surely be shared by all peace researchers. It will constitute the common core of peace studies. And peace studies will be integrated by this common research orientation (Jeong 1999: 6).

In this sense, the point raised by the theory of structural violence will be inherited in its fundamental aspect. And peace studies will be interested in “transformative possibilities for the improvement of human well-being [such as economic development, environmental preservation, realization of social justice] as well as the prevention of [direct] violence” (Jeong 1999: 6). Peace studies can no longer revert to the stage before the theory of structural violence when one could speak of peace as the absence of war.

Probably it is upon this understanding of the goal of the discipline that many still advocate the broadening of the peace studies agenda. For example, many advocate the inclusion of environmental issues into the research agenda of peace studies, though their proposals are expressed by a variety of forms such as the “greening of peace research” (Pirages 1991), placing “ecopolitics in peace studies” (Kegley 1997) or the “notion of peace with nature or ecological justice” (Wenden 1995: 14) and so on.

As we saw above, leading peace studies journals are shifting their focus more and more toward the issues of war and conflict. Though Alger (1999) suggests the greater relevance of (shifting to) non-violent approaches in his evolutionary learning description, more than half of the 24 peace building tools which he enumerates directly deal with war and conflict⁽⁴⁾. The recent book edited by Ho-Won Jeong, *A New Agenda for Peace Research*, consists of three parts; “nature of violence and war,” “management and prevention of violence,” and “structural changes” (Jeong 1999: 11). In the same way, more than half of the articles collected directly address war and conflict (Jeong 1999: 9-10).

From these observations, it may be tentatively concluded that peace studies seems to be again moving its attention more and more to war and conflict. Though the scope may have shifted with the changes in the nature of conflict and insecurity, the purpose of peace studies has not changed. The main issue is to “prevent political violence” (Tromp 1992: 12). or “[the] goal [of peace studies] is now, as it was [at its birth], to render obsolete the field of security studies based on the military defense of nation-states” (Boulding 1992: 2)

Recent re-emphasis upon war and conflict reflects the judgment that war and conflict are the greatest obstacle to the ultimate goal of peace formulated above and it also reflects the collective decision that peace studies should be devoted to the elimination of this obstacle from time immemorial. In an age when “democratic peace” and “the obsolescence of major wars” are asserted, wars and conflicts to be studied will not be limited to major wars in the advanced industrial world; rather local wars and conflicts, and other forms of organized violence, especially their prevention and solution, should be given much more attention than before. In this sense, we can say that, as Boulding once advocated, peace studies is now directing itself toward the elimination of the most serious hindrance, war, to its ultimate goal, peace.

4 Peace and Security

But the (re)orientation of peace studies faces with a very difficult problem to solve, namely, the issue of security. Security studies has recently been witnessing the same kind of dilemma, the “wide” versus “narrow” debate (Buzan et al 1998: 2, Dupont 1997: 32, Shultz et al 1997: 1), as that between the broader and narrower agendas in peace studies which we sketched above⁽⁵⁾. “Wideners” argued for expanding the scope of security agenda to include non-military sources of threat, while “traditionalists” argued for the established equation of security with military issues and the use of force (Buzan et al 1998: 1-2, Shultz et al 1997: 1-2). The broadened agenda usually includes environmental degradation (ozone depletion, global warming, scarcity of renewable and non-renewable resources), damages upon domestic economy caused by international capital, organized crimes like drug traffics, massive human rights violations, population explosions, refugees and uncontrolled population migration, infectious diseases (Patman 1999: 4, Roy 1997: 2)

The arguments of the proponents of the narrower traditional agenda are essentially the same as those raised against the broadening of peace studies, some of which are cited above. In essence, they are against the excessive dilution and diversification of the discipline, though they don’t deny the importance of the issues themselves such as environmental degradation and international economy. For example, though he supports a wider agenda, Barry Buzan warns against the time when it becomes difficult to distinguish security studies from international relations studies (Buzan 1992: 483). And Shultz and others argue that the expansion would risk “dilution and diversion [of the discipline] to such an extent that every critical national and international problem would be defined as a security issue,” with the result that “security studies would subsume not only all of international relations, but much of domestic politics as well” (Shultz et al 1997: 3). Many agree that “if everything that causes a decline in human well-being is labeled a security threat, the term loses any analytical usefulness” (Deudney 1991: 24).

What is of relevance here is not the similarity of the debates in peace studies and security studies. The broadening of the concept of security has a direct consequence on peace studies in two senses.

First, as we mentioned above in passing, recent peace studies anthologies emphasize the issue of security. They point out the changes in nature and scope of security, or in sources of insecurity (Balász 1993: 8, Boulding 1992: 3-4). Thus, the change or widening of the concept of security directly affects the peace studies agenda.

Secondly, the broadening of peace studies agenda has recently been claimed on the ground that the issue in question, for example, environmental degradation, is a threat to human well-being, and hence a security issue in the broadened sense. Therefore, the issue should be included in the peace studies agenda. Let us take up the case of environmental degradation as an example and examine the arguments in some detail.

It is frequently argued that since the “relationship between human beings and the sustaining capabilities of the global ecosystem is rapidly becoming a significant source of human suffering, [and environmental issues are] new sources of conflict and misery” (Pirages 1991: 129), peace studies should pay much more attention to ecological insecurity and must be more closely tied to the preservation of the global environment (Pirages 1991: 132). Or others argue that security means much more than escaping from the fear of military conflict, but also means “the freedom from the danger of destroying and degrading the global environment.” Thus, it is necessary to broaden the prevailing concept of global

security (Kegley 1997: 427).

In this way, most of the argument emphasizes that environmental issues are security issues and hence peace studies issues. To complicate the matter, however, there are actually two groups among the proponents of “environmental peace.” One group emphasizes environmental degradation (including environmental scarcities or the resource depletion) as a cause of violent conflict (for example, Deudney 1991: 26-28, Howard 1997: 64, Kegley 1997: 439). The other emphasizes it as a cause of the reduction in human well-being.

On one hand, the former fits rather well with the narrower definition of peace because the environmental issues such as resource depletion can be a serious cause of conflict. In spite of the opposition, for example, from Deudney (1991: 26-28)⁶, many agree that such environmental issues are to be included in the research agenda as long as they are a cause of intrastate and interstate conflict. On the other hand, the latter argument can fit with the broader concept of peace originally proposed by Galtung. According to his definition, if environmental degradation causes a decline in human well-being, then it prevents the full realization of human potential and it should be regarded as a manifestation of violence, and should therefore be a legitimate research subject of peace studies.

Ken Booth went the farthest in this respect. Instead of “freedom from threat”(Buzan 1992: 484) or “need for feelings of safety and survivability” (Kegley 1997: 439), he proposes “emancipation” as the key concept for the understanding of security. Emancipation means freeing people from such constraints as war, poverty, oppression and poor education. Emancipation and security are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation leads to security (Booth 1991: 539). Though they may have been reached through different routes, the similarity between “emancipation” and “positive peace” is obvious.

Though peace studies is clearly moving toward reintegration, the same problem still remains. The issue of security poses the same problem as before. The issue of security is now working as a force both toward integration and toward fragmentation.

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Notes

- (1) The “first” wave was early in the 1990s, when the following textbooks were published
 Matsuo, Masatsugu (1990), *Heiwa Kenkyu Nyumon (An Introduction to Peace Research)*, Hiroshima, Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation; Shibata, Shingo (ed.) (1992), *Senso to Heiwa no Riron (Theories of War and Peace)*, Tokyo, Keiso Shobo; Nibu, Hisakichi et al (eds.) (1993), *To Study Peace (Heiwa o Manabu)*, Tokyo, Chobunsha; Takada, Kazuo (1993), *Peace in the Contemporary World (Gendai Sekai to Heiwa)*, Kyoto, Horitsu-Bunkasha; Okamoto, Mitsuo (1993), *Creating Peace Studies - Its Agenda, History and Challenge, (Heiwagaku o Tukururu - Koso, Rekishi and Kadai)*, Hiroshima, Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation.
- (2) The second wave was represented by the following textbooks.
 Usui, Hisakazu and Akiyoshi Hoshino (eds.) (1999), *Peace Studies (Heiwagaku)*, Tokyo, Sanrei Shobo; Okamoto, Mitsuo and Masaki Yokoyama (eds.) (1999), *Peace Studies in the Making (Heiwagaku no*

Genzai), Kyoto, Horitsu-Bunkasha; Peace Research Institute, Soka University (ed.) (1999), *Peace Studies for World Citizens (Chikyuu Shimin o Mezasu Heiwagaku)* Tokyo, Daisan Bunmeisha; Takayanagi, Sakio (2000), *An Introduction to Peace Studies: To Understand War, (Senso o Shiru tame no Heiwagaku Nyumon)*, Tokyo, Chikuma Shobo.

Though it is not intended to be a textbook, we should add to the list; Okamoto, Mitsuo (1999). *Peace Studies - Its History and Development (Heiwagaku - Sono Kiseki to Tenkai)*, Kyoto, Horitsu-Bunkasha

- (3) Peace studies in other countries do not seem so happy. For example, Adelson (2000) reports the difficulty facing peace studies programs of McMaster University in Canada (117-118).
- (4) Of the 24, these are; "balance of power," "collective security," "peacekeeping," "humanitarian intervention," "disarmament," "arms control," "defensive defence," "conversion," "diplomacy," "peaceful settlement," "second track approach," "preventive diplomacy," "citizen defence" (Alger 1999: 41). Others are given in the text.
- (5) Wiberg (1992: 492, note 5) was probably one of the first who pointed out the similarity of the debates in peace studies and security studies.
- (6) Deudeny's opposition is to the inclusion of environmental issues to the *national* security issue. If they are treated as a national security issue, then, in the same way as traditional national security issues of national defence, their solutions (including preventive measures) will be monopolized by the state and the military, "the blood-soaked garments of the war system, [and environmentalists will] betray their core values" (Deudeny 1991: 28).

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